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WHAT A TESTAMENT FOUND IN THE WATER DID.

BY

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WHAT A TESTAMENT FOUND IN THE WATER DID.

In the year 1854 a fleet of English warships entered the harbor of Nagasaki. This was before any treaty with England, and such an event created great excitement. A large force of troops was detailed to watch the vessels and prevent any trade or intercourse with the people. The commander-in-chief was named Wakasa Murata, and he was accustomed to go out in a boat to see that all was right and that no secret communication was attempted.

Bread on the Waters.

On one of these excursions he discovered in the water a small Pocket

Testament, which was quite unlike any book he had ever seen, and he was very anxious to know its contents. After considerable inquiry, he learned from some Dutch interpreter that it told about God and Jesus Christ. This only increased his curiosity to understand it all; and, having heard that there was a translation in China, he sent to Shanghai and procured a copy. Having returned to his home at Saga he began the study of the Testament, and induced four others to join him. One of these was a brother named Ayabe, and another a relative named Motono.

Ayabe.

In the autumn of 1862 Ayabe came to Nagasaki for further instruction, and was taught by Rev. Dr. Verbeck. During the following spring this man came one night to Dr. Verbeck and warned him of danger to

himself and family if they did not leave at once. It is probable that this caution saved their lives, as they fled to China and remained there until the serious troubles which followed were ended.

Motono.

When Dr. Verbeck returned, he found that Ayabe had received some government appointment which removed him from Nagasaki, and it seemed that all his labours and prayers were to be in vain. But not long after, Mr. Murata sent Motono (who had learned to read English) with instructions to read over and get explanations of such portions of the Scriptures as they could not understand; and also to procure any books that would be helpful to them in their studies of the word of God. In this manner the Bible class was carried on for nearly three years,—the faithful messenger

often making the two days' journey to Nagasaki and returning in due time with the desired knowledge.

"After many Days."

On the 14th of May 1866, a messenger came to Dr. Verbeck and announced that some high officials from the province of Hizen had arrived, and desired him to appoint a day and hour for an interview. To his great joy and surprise, these men proved to be Mr. Murata, with his brother and Motono.

At the appointed time Mr. Murata and his train appeared. He was then one of the ministers of state, or governors of the province. In appearance he was tall and dignified, with a most pleasing expression. He said to Dr. Verbeck, "I have long known you in my mind, and desired to converse with you; and I am very happy that, in God's providence, I am at last

permitted to enjoy this privilege." Two of his sons were with him.

These men had evidently received the word with all readiness of mind, and now sought only for some additional light in reference to Christian character and customs. In the course of their conversation Mr. Murata said, "Sir, I cannot tell you my feelings when for the first time I read the account of the character and work of Jesus Christ. I had never seen, heard of, or imagined such a person. I was filled with admiration, overwhelmed with emotion, and taken captive by the record of his nature and life." He showed great familiarity with the Bible, made several pertinent quotations, and was prepared to believe all that Jesus said, and to do whatever he required.

"What doth hinder Me?"

After a long conversation on the power and love of Christ, Dr. Verbeck was taken quite by surprise by the request from Mr. Murata that he and his brother should be baptized. It was well known that such an act would be attended with great peril, as the law at that time strictly prohibited the Christian religion. Motono also wished for baptism. Dr. Verbeck warned them not to entertain any superstitious notions in regard to the efficacy and importance of baptism, and told them of the sacred obligations of those who received it. After explaining the form, they were asked to decide as in the presence of God. Without hesitation the request was repeated, with the simple provision that it should not be made public, as it would not only endanger their own lives but their families also.

Further examination showed that their experience had been thorough. They felt their sins to be great, and realized the need of a Saviour. Recognizing the insufficiency of all other systems, they joyfully received Christ as their hope for time and for eternity.

The following Sabbath evening was appointed for the ceremony, and at the appointed hour the three men appeared. Their retainers were dismissed with orders to return in an hour. The shutters were closed, and after some words of exhortation they were baptized and partook of the sacrament. "Now," said Mr. Murata, "I have that which I have long been heartily wishing for." He then told the story of the book found twelve years before in the harbor of Nagasaki, and all that it had led to.

Mr. Murata returned home (like the eunuch who had met Philip) rejoicing in the love of God and the

presence of the Holy Spirit. Dr. Verbeck removed to Tokio, and the account sent to America was carefully preserved and for a long time was known to but a few.

Unlooked for Visitors.

In April, 1880, Rev. Mr. Booth, of Nagasaki, was surprised one Sabbath morning to see in his audience two strangers; a lady of evident rank and her attendant. They sat in front, and not only gave the most strict attention, but often during the service would wipe the tears from their eyes. At the close, they introduced themselves, the one as the daughter of Mr. Murata, and the other as her former nurse. They were anxious to have an interview at once, but were requested to wait until the next day.

Early the next morning they appeared and told how faithfully they had been taught about the true God

and Jesus Christ the Saviour. They had learned the Lord's Prayer and a few portions of Scripture, which Mr. Murata had written out in simple characters for their special use. Mr. Murata had died eight years before, with a firm hope of eternal life through the Redeemer. The daughter had married and was now living with her family in Nagasaki. Since the removal of Dr. Verbeck, she knew of no Christian or missionary to whom she could go for sympathy and instruction. Her husband was soon to remove to Osaka, and she did not wish to leave until she had received baptism ; so she went to Saga for her old friend and nurse, and together they set out to find a missionary.

At first they discovered a Catholic priest, who gave them a prayer book ; but upon examining it, they decided that this must be a different kind of teaching from that which they had

before received. They did not dare to make inquiries on the street, as they would be suspected of being Christians, and would only be treated with insults. After wandering about for some days they chanced to find a store where Scriptures of the American Bible Society were kept for sale. They saw on the covers some familiar characters, and so they went in and began to examine the books. On opening the Gospel of Mathew they saw the Sermon on the Mount, and recognizing it as the same they had already learned, their joy was unbounded. They purchased a full supply of Scriptures at once, and talked with the bookseller until midnight. This was on Saturday, and it was the next day they appeared at the service. Now they both desired baptism at once.

Mr. Booth asked why they were so desirous of receiving this rite. They

replied, "Whosoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." And when he said, "How can I know that you are true believers?" The young woman replied, "It has been my custom for years to go into my husband's storehouse every day for private meditation and prayer to God, and the Father of Jesus Christ." To the question, "How do you know this salvation is for you?" they replied, "It is written, 'Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'" With tearful eyes they begged that they might not be denied the sacred ordinance.

Rejoicing in God.

A time was fixed for the ceremony, and the intervening days were spent in careful Christian instruction. At the appointed time the lady was accompanied by her husband who listened with close attention to all the service,

and at its close expressed a desire to know more of Christianity. "We can never," said Mr. Booth, "forget the expression of peaceful joy which shone in the faces of the two women as they went away. When I met them afterward they would talk of nothing but Christianity, and seemed to be very happy to be called Christians."

Fruitful in Good Works.

The nurse returned to her old home in Saga and resumed her work of teaching a small school of girls. She soon organized a class of women for the study of the Bible, and after a time began a Sabbath school with the members of the Bible class as teachers. There is now a considerable number of professing Christians in that town, and many of them have been brought to Christ through her efforts. Although she has gone

to her reward in heaven the work has not ceased. Among the believers is a son of Mr. Murata. A request has been sent to Nagasaki for a regular preacher, a church formed, and this is to-day one of the bright spots in Kiushiu.

"And thy House."

The daughter of Murata (Mrs. Kumashiro) went with her husband and family to Osaka, where she soon became one of the leaders in Christian activity and benevolence. Her distinguished rank and earnest devotion gave her great influence. When her husband returned from a trip to some island, and reported that he had there found a people who were without any religion, she went to the pastor and begged that some one would go and teach them, and offered to pay half the salary and expenses herself. She has since removed to Tokio, and after

attending the training school for Christian women has devoted herself to work for the salvation of those around her. Her husband has been led to Christ by her example and the study of God's word, and is a deacon in the Sukiyabashi church. Like his wife he is active and interested in everything that tends to the spread of God's kingdom. A daughter has made a profession of religion and is the wife of a telegraph operator in Northen Japan.

Ayabe, Again.

About fifteen years ago, Dr. Verbeck was acting as an interpreter at a meeting in Tokio, and at the close a man stepped forward and said to him, "I am Ayabe, the brother of Mr. Murata. Since my baptism I have been in the army, and also employed in surveying. During all these years I have always carried the Bible with

me, and have been accustomed to read it daily."

Ayabe called at the Bible House and confirmed the above narrative. He was then living in Tokio, and was for some time employed as a local preacher of the Methodist Church. Thus he has also become an active and useful worker in the extention of Christ's kingdom in Japan.

Rev. Dr. Gordon of Kyoto reports that a grandson of Mr. Murata was for a while a student in the Christian school (the Doshisha) at that place, and presented to the institution a fine English Bible which Mr. Murata was constrained to place in the care of a friend in order to avoid suspicion from the authorities, and which was in that friend's care until very recently.

CIRCULATION

In Japan from 1890 to 1896.

	Bibles.	Tests.	...rts.	Total.	Value.
July 1890 to 1891	3,[illegible]	24,795	54,907	83,170	9,256.75
1892	2,142	12,655	29,119	43,916	5,826.92
1893	2,932	16,445	56,843	76,220	7,036.57
1894	3,222	21,672	89,045	113,939	7,596.51
1895	2,535	20,062	234,981	257,578	9,164.24
1896	2,720	14,725	83,011	100,456	6,593.11
Total	17,019	110,354	547,906	675,279	45,474.10